

Tell Him Why

When your boy wants to do what he shouldn't—
Some foolish or dangerous thing.
Or something you wish that he wouldn't,
A deed that disaster may bring,
That he must not you hasten to tell him
And threaten him should he defy,
With a positive order you quell him,
But do you explain to him why?

When you want him to do what he should do,
When you're eager to have him polite,
When its something you know that he could do,
Do you train him with reason or fright?
You may say that he 'must' or severely
With him you will deal by and by;
You see why it's proper most clearly,
But do you explain to him why?

A boy's mind is open to reason,
A thinking device is his brain;
Injustice he's ready to seize on,
So why don't you stop to explain?
It's perfectly proper to check him
When you see that in danger he'd fly,
But it certainly sure that you'll wreck him
Unless you explain to him why.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)